

Kansas Insect Newsletter

For Agribusinesses, Applicators, Consultants and Extension Personnel



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September 5, 2008 No. 22

Bagworms: Is It Too Late To Treat?

Bagworm caterpillars are still out-and-about and maybe causing some plant damage. However, can you effectively “control” bagworms during this time of year? First of all, bagworms are not feeding as extensively as they had earlier since both the males and females are in the initial stages of transitioning into an adult or preparing for reproduction. If bagworms have formed a “cap” on the bag then this indicates that the males will be pupating, and females will be laying eggs. As such, they will be less susceptible to any insecticide sprays. The males, which are “ugly” black moths with clear wings, emerge from the bottom of the bag and fly off to mate with females. Females never develop into winged moths and lack eyes, wings, legs, and antennae. They remain inside the bag, producing up to 1,000 eggs before dying. The eggs are the overwintering stage and there is only one generation per year. So, what can you do? Well, if feasible (depending on plant size and abundance of bags), handpicking and destroying the bags from fall through mid-spring is very effective in removing the overwintering eggs before they hatch. Bags should be placed into a sealed plastic container and disposed of immediately. Suggestion: take your economic stimulus checks that you received from the government, and pay “someone” 10 cents for each bag removed. This should impact the bagworm population for next season...and “stimulate” the economy.



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Pine Pitch Moth

There have been several inquiries regarding the management of pine pitch moth (*Dioryctria tumicolella*) attacking Scotch and Austrian pines. This is one of the wood-boring caterpillars that tunnels into the trunk where the branches are attached to the tree. The larvae are pink-gray in color and approximately 1.0-inch in length. As the larvae bore through the tree they create pink pitch masses that adhere to the bark of infested trees. Pine pitch moth larvae can girdle trees and cause the main terminal growth to break-off at the point of attack. The adults are 1-1/4 inches long, brown-gray moths with a mottled pattern on the wings. Adults are active in August and females lay eggs on pine trees near branch whorls. There is typically one generation per year. Pheromone traps may be useful in detecting adult activity, which will help in timing insecticide applications. Since this is a “caterpillar-type borer,” the use of pyrethroid-based insecticides such as bifenthrin, permethrin, or lambda-cyhalothrin are recommended for “control.” Insecticide applications have to be initiated prior to eggs hatching because once the larvae have entered the tree then it is too late. As with nearly all wood-boring insects, plants that are or have experienced “stress” are more susceptible to attack than those trees receiving proper moisture, fertility, and mulch. For example, drought or dry weather, and poor soil conditions promote damage by pine pitch moth.



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Cicada Killer Wasps

Since cicadas (especially the dog day cicada, *Tibicen pruinosus*) are present and singing ‘voraciously’, this means that the eastern cicada killer, *Sphecius speciosus* may be more noticeable...particularly the males. Remember, male cicada killers establish aerial territories and patrol for intruders. A male cicada killer wards off other males that enter his territory and attempt to mate with females. Anyone else, such as a human, walking into the territory is typically confronted by a very large wasp, which hovers in front of the face and “zips” to the side and back. However, after determining that the “intruder” is not a rival, the male cicada killer ignores the individual. Unfortunately, as a person walks across a lawn, fairway, or other area where these wasps are nesting, the process is repeated through each male’s territory. Cicada killers are unlikely to sting a person. Wasp and bee stingers are modified egg-laying devices (=ovipositors), so males are unable to sting. Females may sting if crushed, either by being stepped on with bare feet or grabbed with bare hands.



Raymond Cloyd

Weekly Report from the Kansas State University Insect Diagnostic Laboratory:

The following samples were submitted to the Insect Diagnostician Laboratory from August 29th to September 4th.

- September 02 2008: Mead County – Codling moth damage and San Jose scale insects on apple tree
- September 02 2008: Shawnee County – Roundheaded borers in Red Oak
- September 02 2008: Riley County – Squash bugs and sap beetles in garden
- September 02 2008: Riley County – Wheel bug on person
- September 02 2008: Logan County – Soldier beetles on Marigolds
- September 02 2008: Morris County – Possible maize weevil in home

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September 03 2008: Riley County – Fungus gnat larvae on golf course

September 03 2008: Harvey County – Drugstore beetles in commercial building

If there are any questions regarding these samples or about the identification of any arthropod please contact the Insect Diagnostician at (785) 532-4739 or GotBugs@ksu.edu.

Holly Davis

Sincerely,

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